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of whom with one accord acclaim its promoters as the nation's benefactors. Indeed, it will be surprising if "St. Anthony's Bread" does not result in the complete regeneration of the French working classes—and if of these, why not of the working classes of all Europe and beyond? For the scope of "St. Anthony's Bread" is no longer confined to France. As, at the start, it spread from town to town throughout France, so is it now spreading from country to country throughout the world. It is interesting to learn that this great work is to be introduced into the United States during the coming winter. The result will be watched with interest.

As is well known, the literature of the social question is immense, and is growing rapidly every day. Herr Stamhammer, in his *Bibliographie des Socialismus*, enumerates some five thousand works more or less immediately dealing with it, and the catalogue is by no means complete. Words! There were storms of words on this same subject long before the French Revolution. Theories are very well; we may combat Mr. George and quote passages from Albertus Magnus down to Leo Taxil, but in this century, mere theorizing never brought about any reform. Action is the true policy, and no steps that could be taken in this direction are more thoroughly practical than those adopted by the founders of "St. Anthony's Bread."

"St. Anthony's Bread" is based upon the divine principle of charity. And such Christian charities as this, which has for its aim the care of the poor *without distinction as to race or creed*, not only provide a sovereign balm for all the carking cares of the unfortunate, but have also the happy effect of eliminating acrimony from the minds of men.

CHARLES ROBINSON.

#### THEN AND NOW.

NO DOUBT there were splendid specimens of humanity, both physically and intellectually, among the ancients. The Venus of Milo, the Apollo Belvidere, the Farnese Hercules were not evolved from the unassisted imagination. Even if they were so evolved, they who conceived such glorious ideals would themselves have represented a high type of mankind. The *Iliad* and the *Ædipus Tyrannus* are incontrovertible facts. Even among the earliest prehistoric races there must have been men of wonderful genius and energy. The man who kindled the first fire and broiled the first steak was the peer of any modern discoverer, and he who first smelted iron ore was the intellectual equal of Edison himself. The prehistoric discoverer of the Ecliptic was not surpassed in astronomical achievement even by him who ages afterwards formulated the Nebular Hypothesis, or by him who chemically analyzed the stars. Some of us moderns are disposed to magnify unduly the triumphs of our day in comparison with those of former ages, forgetting that they who built the lower stories of the vast temple of human achievement are as worthy of praise as they who raised it to loftier heights. It is still far below its destined entablature; but even those whose privilege it shall be to place upon it its architectural crown in the sunlight of the upper air, will deserve no better of their race than those who laid its foundations in the darkness of the past.

Others are equally disposed to glorify unduly the past in comparison with the present. To them there have been no poets since Homer and Virgil, no orators since Demosthenes and Cicero, no philosophers since Socrates and Plato, no commanders since Alexander and Hannibal, no artists since Phidias and Apelles. To them only the dead languages are the fitting vehicles of

beautiful and sublime thought. The modern tongues, in spite of Browning, Goëthe, Hugo, Tolstoi, Whitman, are, as Blackie called them, "but barbarous jargon."

Now I attach very little importance to the probable fact that, if the *Iliad* had been done for the first time in English, with all its picturesque power (with all deference to those who would insist upon the impossibility of such a feat), it would stand no chance whatever of acceptance by the great American publishers. Its rejection would, no doubt, be accompanied by the consoling statement, made in perfect good faith, that it was not on account of lack of literary merit, but simply because it was not suited to present needs. Possibly some slight hope of acceptance might be encouraged if the twenty-four books were condensed to twelve. And this, by the way, might not have been so absurd a suggestion as it might appear to the school of antiquity-worshippers, who regard every line of the immortal poem as sacred, to whom even the interminable "catalogue of ships" would not bear abbreviating, notwithstanding the manifest fact that the chief concern of the compiler was, lest he might inadvertently slight the skipper of one of the insignificant little boats. Imagine the whole Lilliputian fleet participating in the international naval review of two years ago! What would Agamemnon and Achilles have thought of those mighty dragons of modern warfare, breathing forth clouds and shaking the earth with their roar? Would not their trumpery Zeus and Ares have sunk into insignificance by comparison? But then, on the other hand, suppose the glowing imagination of the childhood of our race had been brought to bear upon the mechanical achievements of its manhood; suppose, for example, that Homer could have witnessed that grandest of all naval spectacles in the history of the world—should we not have had something more adequate in its commemoration than long-winded, gossipy newspaper reports and a few feeble rhymes in the magazines? Suppose, again, that the Blind Bard of Seven Cities could have visited the White City in 1893, would any magazine have rejected the epic he would have been constrained to write in favor of any little lyric or ode that it actually inspired?

But then we may have the epic yet, for poetry is not dead, even if the world has outgrown its glowing childhood.

Manifestly the world is aging far more rapidly than formerly, but it has not reached its decrepitude, as many seem to think. The time has not come for it to ignore the present and the future, and dwell only on the remote past, like the old dotard who sits by the fire and thinks only of the wonderful things he did when he was a boy.

Whether the individual man of to-day is, on the whole, naturally a finer, stronger, nobler being than his ancient progenitor, is a difficult question. Pessimists say he is a degenerate being in spite of his schoolhouses, his universities, and his oceanic literature; his telephones, his electric cars, and his world's fairs. As a superabundance of food does not necessarily produce highly developed bodies, so, they say, a superabundance of mental pabulum does not create intellectual giants. A man may travel over the whole civilized world, and return to his home with only a jaded interest in human achievements, with sensibilities only the more calloused to the novel, the ingenious, the beautiful, and the sublime. On the other hand, the optimist holds that each succeeding century has lifted the race to a higher plane of being; that, where a man is subject to more new impressions in a day than his remote ancestor received in a year, perhaps, his powers must necessarily

develop more rapidly. This would, of course, be true if he retained his impressibility. An impression upon wax, however, and an impression upon marble are two very different things, as we learned in our First Reader in the primary school.

But whether the individual man has increased in stature or not, there is no denying that the race as a whole has grown from feeble infancy to vigorous manhood, and that every living member of it would vastly prefer his share in existence to that of one of Homer's contemporaries, classical enthusiasts to the contrary notwithstanding.

EDWARD P. JACKSON.

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### COUNTRY ROADS AND TROLLEYS.

FROM the Colonial era till now the country roads in America have been a reproach to our civilization. Before the War of the Revolution plans were now and again discussed for bringing the various colonies into closer communion by means of well-located and well-constructed highways. In some of the colonies short stretches of good road uniting towns and settlements were built, but there was nothing like a comprehensive system of roads uniting the fringe of settlements along the Atlantic coast, which then constituted the populated part of the continent. The idea in England at that time was that road-making was a matter of purely local concern, and the application of this idea resulted so disastrously that people in one district would suffer for necessities of life, when twenty miles away these very things in unneeded abundance would be perishing from decay. English ideas prevailed in the American colonies, and the roads remained unimproved.

After the War of the Revolution the men who had a genius for administration and the building up of commonwealths appeared to see with entire clearness that the States ought to be connected by a system of good roads, and that branches of these principal roads should unite the various parts of each State. Alexander Hamilton advocated road construction and improvement by the Federal and State governments, and Washington with his practical common sense, recommended that the opening, the making and the maintenance of roads be taken absolutely away from the local authorities. But less wise men could not see how the people of a city were interested in the roads in the country, and why those of one neighborhood should concern themselves about the roads twenty or fifty miles away, which they rarely if ever used. And so, as before the Revolution, the country highways continued, for something like half a century, to be controlled by the purely local authorities.

Meantime Napoleon had given to France a wonderful network of roads; and her agriculture and manufactures flourished notwithstanding unparalleled drains upon her for men and money. In England too the old parish and neighborhood idea of road construction had been in a great measure abandoned and roads after the plans of McAdam and Telford had been constructed nearly all over the kingdom. There was activity too in America and at last the principle was recognized by Congress and by several State legislatures that road-making was a matter for both Federal and State assistance. Several ambitious projects were discussed and the Federal government agreed to lend its aid to the construction of the National Road from tide water in Maryland to the navigable waters of the Ohio River.